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LETTERS OPPOSED TO

RAISED BILL NO. 6262

CAPITAL AREA SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNCIL, INC.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Mirelle Freedman

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - **President** Waldemar Gracia, Clinical Director, Institute for the Hispanic Family, Hartford • **Vice President** Laurie Mucciacciaro, Intake Social Worker, Farmington • **Treasurer** Cliff Preen, Enterprise Information Architect, The Hartford, Simsbury • **Secretary** Peter Black, Youth Director, Suffield • **At-Large** Ingrid Helander, Youth Counselor, Granby • Eileen K. Walker, Concerned Citizen, Granby **Board of Directors** - Joan Biagioni, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator, West Hartford Public Schools • Patricia A. Devendorf, Better Choice Gambling Treatment Program, Wheeler Clinic, Inc., Hartford • Nilda Fernandez, UCONN/CCMC Community Health Worker, Farmington • Marcus Fink, Director, United Synagogue Youth, Hanefesh Region, Rocky Hill • Chief Betsy J.S. Hard, Bloomfield Police Department • Hebe Kudisch, Program Director, Alcohol Drug Recovery Center, Hartford • Carla Marciano, Executive Director, Farmington Valley Student Union, Inc. • Faith McMahon, CT House of Representatives, Bloomfield/Windsor • Robert Skinner, CAO, Town of Canton • Lori Stanczyk, Director of Youth & Family Services, Rocky Hill • Joanne St. Peter, Principal, Hartland Elementary School

Mirelle Freedman, Executive Director
Capital Area Substance Abuse Council
3 Barnard Lane
Bloomfield, CT 06002

February 2, 2009

Hi Mirelle.

I did want to follow up w/ you on the COMET semi- annual Report which you submitted last November as part of your Drug Free communities program. The report was quite impressive. There were several areas that I want to highlight:

1. Assessment – clearly CASAC is actively pursuing ongoing assessment activities in order to continue to build solid prevention systems. These activities include reviewing data, assessing funding streams, and continuing to expand the coalition membership.
2. Partnerships – it is quite impressive the number of partners that you are working w/ to keep prevention efforts front and center.
3. Planning and Implementation – clearly the coalition members and yourself are committed and are performing numerous workshops, hearings, educational programs, and other activities.
4. Sustainability – The coalition and yourself are working hard on this. I wish you the best of luck.

Please keep up this good work. You are clearly a model for our new coalitions as they begin their DFC process.

R. Thomas DeLoe, Ph.D

Team Leader, Southwest/Central Region

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E-Mail: thomas.deloe@samhsa.hhs.gov



Pupil Services Department

50 South Main Street, West Hartford, CT 06107 • Phone: (860) 561-6601 • Fax: (860) 561-6619

February 5, 2009

Senator Paul Doyle
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Doyle,

I am writing you in regard to **Raised Bill No.6262 An Act Regarding Regional Action Councils** which has been referred to the Committee on Public Health, and would restructure and reduce us from our current format of 14 RAC's across the state, covering sub-regional territories, to 5 regional territories. In our area alone this would change us from the 12 towns of CNVRAC, to a 44-town coverage area, Region 5.

Basically the Bill states that substance abuse planning at the sub- regional level is both inefficient and not cost-effective. DMHAS seems to only consider "planning" as the RAC's function.

As a member of the Board of Directors of CASAC (one of the 14 RAC's) I strongly disagree and ask you not to support this Bill for the following reasons.

The 14 Regional Action Councils are not only cost-effective but a good investment. The total amount of funding leveraged by the RAC's in fiscal years 2005-2009 reaches more than \$18 million dollars. More than \$6 million dollars in federal funding was brought to Connecticut for projects and services at the local level. RAC's apply for federal Drug Free Communities, Mentoring and Stop grants by virtue of their position as community-based public/private partnerships.

In addition to federal dollars, RAC's partner with local foundations, businesses, and municipalities to bring an additional \$7.8 million dollars into their respective communities. Total dollars brought in to support local initiatives was \$18,116,873.

The RAC's do more than administration and planning. They provide:

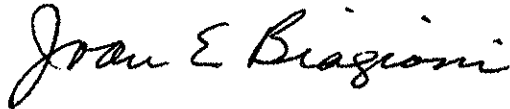
- Community needs assessment through surveys, data collection, and training.
- Program development based on needs assessment.
- Substance abuse awareness, education and prevention initiatives.
- Media advocacy
- Community mobilization
- Grant collaboration
- Legislative advocacy
- Leverage funds for local initiatives.

An office that is now handling 14 towns efficiently and effectively would have to change the way it operates and would most likely become truly administrative and lose the grass roots partnerships that take time and nurturing to establish.

Please do not support this Bill.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joan E Biagioni".

Joan Biagioni, LCSW, CADC



198 Wethersfield Avenue
Hartford, CT 06114
860-218-9531
860-244-2228 Fax
1-800-708-9145

February 5, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter regarding **Raised Bill No. 6262 An Act Regarding Regional Action Councils**, which seeks to restructure the Regional Action Councils from 14 Councils to 5 regional territories. I believe this would do a disservice to people in recovery and others across the spectrum of treatment and prevention. Some of what Regional Action Councils do is highlighted below, and I believe that the Councils would not be able to effectively serve their populations if the restructuring plan was passed. I am also told that this is a *revenue negative* act, which doesn't seem to make economic sense. I have worked with CASAC and other RAC's and have always found them to be extremely helpful and provide an essential service to the regions they serve.

Here are some examples of what they do:

- Build relationships at the local level
- Work to provide the communities that we serve with education, training, and advocacy for substance abuse prevention and related concerns
- Assess community substance abuse problems
- Inventory resources to address substance abuse problems
- Identify gaps in services and changes to community environments that will reduce substance abuse
- Design programs and develop plans to fill identified gaps in services
- Bring key constituency groups together including government leaders, mental health and substance abuse treatment professionals, law enforcement, social service providers, school personnel, parents, civic groups, faith organizations, youth and others
- Work at the grassroots level, allowing information regarding substance abuse and community needs to be collected *and* disseminated, efficiently
- Use coalition input and needs assessment data to gain additional resources to meet the prevention needs of our communities
- Bring in financial resources for programs from sources such as Substance Abuse Mental Health Service Administration's (SAMHSA) Mentoring, Drug-Free Communities and STOP Act Programs; The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The United Way, and local community foundations and other contributions. From 2005-2009 RACs together brought in over 18 million dollars in Federal and local contributions to communities to enhance substance abuse prevention efforts.

Regards,

Kevin Hauschulz

Kevin Hauschulz

Lead Telephone Recovery Support Coordinator

Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR)

860-218-9531

Kevin@ccar.us

Hartland Elementary School

Mrs. Joanne St. Peter
Principal

Dr. Robert V. Fish
Superintendent of Schools

February 5, 2009

Mrs. Mirelle Freedman
Executive Director
Capital Area Substance Abuse Council
3 Barnard Lane
Bloomfield, Connecticut 06002

Dear Mirelle,

As both a board member of CASAC and member of my local prevention council here in Hartland, I feel that I must express concern over the proposal to restructure the RAC's.

I am fully aware that towns such as Hartland serve a small percentage of the population, however as you know, the needs of small towns are more similar than different when compared to larger towns throughout the state, and funding to address those needs is just as critical.

That being said, my concern, simply stated, is that the support and attention that small towns such as ours now receive through CASAC under the present service model might be lost if the RAC's are restructured.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanne St. Peter".

Joanne St. Peter

Jrs/ms

30 South Road, East Hartland, CT 06027 - Tel. (860) 653-7207 - Fax (860) 844-8528



TOWN OF GRANBY
Incorporated 1786

15 NORTH GRANBY ROAD
GRANBY, CONNECTICUT 06035-2125

February 5, 2009

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Capital Area Substance Abuse Council (CASAC). I am the Director of Human Services for the Town of Granby and have had involvement with CASAC for the past 15 years. I am responsible for administering the Town of Granby Youth Service Bureau, Senior Services and Social Services departments and have had involvement with CASAC on many levels.

Historically, the Capital Area Substance Abuse Council has been instrumental in assisting the Town of Granby with planning, implementing and evaluating an number of substance abuse prevention initiatives. CASAC, as the Regional Action Council has provided the Town of Granby Local Prevention Council with a small grant to assist with educational and prevention programs. Although the amount of the grant funding provided to the Local Prevention Council is minimal, the expertise provided by the staff of the Regional Action Council is invaluable and immeasurable.

I strongly oppose consolidating the regional programs into a statewide program. CASAC provides services to all of its member towns in a professional and cost-effective manner. It is in the best interest of the youth and families of the Town of Granby to be involved with a regional prevention program such as the Capital Area Substance Abuse Council.

Sincerely,

KerryAnn Kielbasa
Director of Human Services
Town of Granby

February 5, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Capitol Area Substance Abuse Council (CASAC) as an active board member. The Town of Granby Youth Service Bureau has had an ongoing relationship with CASAC for many years, and I have been involved with the organization for the last five.

As such, I wish to voice my concern about current politics and economics that may serve to consolidate or eliminate the 16 regional action councils (RACs) within the State. It has been my experience with CASAC that its cost vs. accomplishment in the state is very low. CASAC as a Regional Action Council provides small amounts of "seed" monies to create prevention and educational programming about substance abuse and other addictive behaviors. But CASAC does much more. CASAC brings in other funds through grants that boost the States ability in our region to provide region-specific substance abuse measures. In addition, CASAC oversees the work of the 16 town's Local Prevention Councils. This is a critical service as CASAC is able to listen to the unique and common needs of each town. CASAC then provides the latest information and offers support and focus to these groups. With the addition of the contract between the towns and CASAC, CASAC creates accountability for the towns to do this work, oversees and documents their results and, in essence, creates evidence-based programming -- all this for so few actual dollars from the State budget.

I believe that consolidating these regional entities into one would be seriously deleterious to the State's efforts in substance abuse prevention. A State-wide organization would be ineffective in creating the knowledge and personal relationship with its communities, would offer a "cookie cutter" approach to our town's substance abuse issues and could not hold the towns as accountable for their methods as does CASAC.

It is my hope that you will continue to fund CASAC and the other RACs so that they may build upon their current work helping each town in Connecticut to fight substance abuse.

Sincerely,

Ingrid Y. Helander, LMFT

Ingrid Y. Helander, LMFT, CASAC Board Member at Large
Town of Granby
Youth Service Bureau

Mirelle Freedman

From: Marcus D. Fink [fink@uscj.org]
Sent: Thursday, February 05, 2009 12:21 PM
To: 'Mirelle Freedman'
Subject: letter to Senator Harris

Dear Senator Harris:

My name is Marcus Fink and I am the Regional Director of Youth Activities for United Synagogue Youth (USY/Kadima) for the Hanefesh Region (Connecticut and Western Mass.) I am also a member of the CASAC Board as a representative to the religious sector focusing on teens.

I am writing to you as a concerned member of the Capital Area Substance Abuse Council (CASAC) Board of Directors in regards to the DMHAS proposal.

The proposal that is on the table is NOT cost neutral as DMHAS claims it to be. It could, in fact, cost the state 100's of thousands of dollars as the RACs Drug Free Communities funding would be in jeopardy. Presently, 10 of the 14 RACs are Drug Free Communities generally receiving \$100,000 per year for up to ten years; and a number of the RACs also are recipients of SAMHSA Mentoring Grants of \$75,000 per year. The purpose of these mentoring grants is to provide funding to existing DFC grantees (mentors) to support development and/or expansion of new community coalitions (mentees) that are focused on substance abuse prevention.

This proposal would jeopardize everything that CASAC has worked so hard to build within our current communities and partnerships and all the good things that CASAC does for those communities could be lost.

DMHAS has said that all we do is planning. The RACs do so much more than planning. The partnerships we all have grown through the years are testament to the prevention work that's been accomplished and respected within our communities. Our outreach, our partnerships built up over the past 20 years would be greatly put at risk if we were to lose our grassroots initiatives.

Through my organization, USY and CASAC developed a partnership. A few years ago, CASAC sponsored a Gambling Workshop in which USY members participated in and were able to have an open discussion on the effects of Gambling. This type of workshop could have not been possible without CASAC's commitment and dedication to their RAC's.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Marcus D. Fink

Director of Youth Activities, Hanefesh Region USY/Kadima

Member, CASAC Board of Directors


2/5/2009

Marcus D. Fink
Director of Youth Activities

fink@uscj.org
www.hanefesh.org

Hanefesh Region United Synagogue Youth

1800 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 171
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

tel: 860.563.5531 Ext. 13 
fax: 860.563.5541

Add me to your address book...

Want a signature like this?

Mirelle Freedman

From: Jeffery Cohan [jcohan@bol-investments.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 03, 2009 12:48 PM
To: harris@senatedems.ct.gov
Subject: CASAC

Senator Harris,

I am writing to ask that you continue to support the current structure of the Capital Area Substance Abuse Council. Specifically I am requesting that you use your position as a representative of my district in Farmington to keep the 14 grassroots entities of CASAC as opposed to restructuring this significant and worthy effort down to what would be 5 inefficient regional offices. The past 18 years are demonstrative proof that these entities are effective and working as structured. While I recognize that the current economic mood is weighing heavy on many programs I am certain that sustaining the CASAC grassroots model as currently structured is and will continue to be of a higher priority for our communities than many other programs that continue with full support from our state. You and all of the other representatives need to look closely at the effective undertakings on a community by community basis and let this effective and passionately led organization continue their necessary work in our communities.

I am thanking you in advance for your efforts to help sustain these programs as currently structured and funded. For the record I have no affiliation with CASAC other than to have witnessed and experienced the value of their work in our communities.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey A Cohan
19 Boxwood Rd
Farmington, Ct. 06032

2/3/2009



Town of Rocky Hill

699 OLD MAIN STREET • ROCKY HILL, CONNECTICUT 06067 • (860) 258-2724 • FAX (860) 258-2796
HUMAN SERVICES

February 4, 2009

Dear Governor Rell,

It is with great concern that I am writing at this time to call on your support to address a very important issue that the Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (DMHAS) has made to the legislature. Raised Bill No. 6262 An Act Regarding Regional Action Councils has been referred to the Committee on Public Health, and would restructure and reduce prevention resources from our current format of 14 Regional Action Councils (RAC's) across the state, covering sub-regional territories, to 5 regional territories. In our area alone, this would change us from the 16-towns of the Capitol Area RAC, to a 44-town coverage area, Region 5.

RACs were created to be the grassroots community collaborative, involving local level stakeholders as the key partnerships to creating statewide change. These relationships are built over time and by a commitment to the wellness of our citizens. RACs will be extremely challenged to sustain local-level relationships with a service area of 44 towns.

DMHAS proposes that a RAC's main purpose is regional prevention & treatment planning, and that they are primarily administrators. This is only one small piece of what they do as Prevention Professionals in the community. We, the 16 town consortium in the Hartford area, have worked with the CNVRAC and know they serve as community educators; providers of technical assistance; facilitate collaboration; convene workgroups; recognize and support local efforts; provide and share financial and programmatic resources; procure and distribute funds and curriculum; and the list goes on!

Our local prevention council, the Rocky Hill Coalition, has hosted many events utilizing our RAC as a critical resource in the planning and development of our programs. They have been key players in training our youth and community in the environmental approach to substance abuse prevention programming. The Executive Director, Mirelle Freedman, has presented as a keynote speaker and as a panelist in several programs for youth and families in the Town of Rocky Hill. Other RAC staff have attended local meetings, shared resources, provided support and guidance in program development. Our RAC is not only a grant administrator, but a hands on agency, well connected to our community and a lead substance abuse prevention clearinghouse of knowledge and resources. We need the system to remain grassroots and personal.

The DMHAS proposal describes the current structure of RAC's as being inefficient and not cost effective. However, at the end of the proposal in the Significant Fiscal Impacts section, they report "no fiscal savings projected" by this change, at the state level. They maintain that their proposal is revenue neutral, when in fact it is revenue negative. Currently 10 of the 14 RACs are Drug Free Communities, generally receiving \$100,000 per year for up to ten years; and a number of the RACs also are recipients of SAMHSA Mentoring Grants of \$75,000 per year. The purpose of these mentoring grants is to provide funding to existing DFC grantees (mentors) to support development and/or expansion of new community coalitions (mentees) that are focused on substance abuse prevention. A significant number of these grants could be lost, if the number of RACs is reduced.

RACs are in fact, revenue positive. In our current structure, from 2005-2009, we have collectively brought into our communities, over 18 million dollars in federal and local funds and in-kind services. The procurement of many of these funds was dependent on local-level relationships, the very relationships that may be jeopardized by regionalizing our structure.

Please help to maintain the current Regional Action Council Structure.

Thank-you.

Sincerely,

Lori Stanczyk, M.Ed., LPC
Rocky Hill Youth & Family Services
860-258-2718

